

# Motivation

“When leaders expect members to be realistically committed and believe that they are capable, they fulfill those expectations” -Roland Barth

The ability to motivate others has long been an accepted hallmark of the successful leader. This is true of student leaders on college campuses, as well as CEOs of Fortune 500 companies. In an organization where people are motivated, there is maximum productivity, efficiency, and enjoyment.

Motivating others is a leadership skill you can learn, says Harvard University Professor, Roland Barth. If you're willing to consistently apply the five *Guiding Principles* of motivating others.

## Guiding Principle #1: Positive reinforcement

Before you continue, take a moment to truthfully answer this question: When do you make a bigger fuss- when somebody does something wrong, or when somebody does something right? Most student leaders fall into the familiar trap of emphasizing the negative.

B.F. Skinner, the father of behavioral psychology, acknowledges that negative reinforcement causes change. However, that change is often strange, unpredictable, and undesirable. Positive reinforcement also causes change, but usually in the intended direction.

If you plan to use positive reinforcement as a motivational tool, keep a few things in mind:

1. Positive reinforcement works best if it's specific to the task at hand.
2. Reinforcement should be immediate. Your positive words and actions should closely follow the behavior.

3. Set attainable goals for others, to enable them to succeed. This provides opportunities for positive feedback.
4. Sometimes important feedback comes in the form of the intangible, but ever so meaningful, attention. People will respond well if you give them some positive attention.
5. Frequent small rewards of words of praise are more important than infrequent large ones. However, regular reinforcement is not as effective as intermittent reinforcement. Saying “Good job!” everyday become ineffective. A specific compliment given occasionally is a more powerful motivator.

## Guiding Principle #2- Worthiness

In writing about leadership, believing in your members must be stressed. It's just as crucial to let them know about your belief. Let members know you appreciate them not only for what they can do for the *organization*, but for who they are as *individuals*. It is an extremely effective tool.

Another important aspect of the Worthiness Principle relates to the source of motivation. To be committed, people must believe that a task is inherently worthwhile. Such personal commitment, called *intrinsic motivation*, is by far the most powerful type. Working with the intrinsic motivation of members is an important, yet often overlooked, component of leadership.

The philosopher Nietzsche wrote, “He who has a *why* to live for can bear almost any *how*.” Leaders must continually find ways to keep the meaning and mission of the organization in the minds of its members.

It's easy for student leaders to get caught up in details of programming. But programming isn't what convinced

people to join the fraternity, nor will it be their motivation to stay involved. Pay attention to the “mechanics” of getting the job done, of course. But, more important, pay attention to expressing the “big picture” items of mission, purpose and goals.

### **Guiding Principle #3: Nothing succeeds like success**

Most people are familiar with this expression. There’s a sound scientific basis for it.

Researchers studying motivation say subjects are more likely to be successful when they believe they’re doing well. That’s what makes them successful. Whether they’re doing well or not by any absolute standard doesn’t seem to matter very much.

In a now famous experiment, adult subjects were given 10 puzzles. Each person worked on the puzzles, turned them in, and received fictitious results.

Half of the people were told they’d done well by seven puzzles correctly. The other half were told they’d done poorly by solving seven puzzles incorrectly. Each person was then given a set of 10 new puzzles.

Which group did better in the second round? The people who were told they’d done well the first time. Those who believed they’d done poorly the first time did, in fact, do poorly the second time. It’s a question of self-perception.

Another study focused on schoolteachers. When they held high expectations for their students, the study found, average IQ scores rose 25 points in a year.

What an amazing power! Motivate the members of your chapter by setting up situations in which they succeed. Tell them- and consistently show them- that you expect and believe they will be successful.

### **Guiding Principle #4: Don’t forget the right brain**

The left brain is the reasoning, sequential, verbal half of the brain. It’s the logical and rational half. The right brain is the artistic half. It sees and remembers patterns, recalls melodies, and waxes poetic. The right half of the brain is terrific at visualizing things, but cannot verbalize any of them.

Most leadership skills are directed at the left brain. Workshops on goal setting, delegation, problem solving, and even motivation focus on the left brain skills.

Right brain research tells us that people are highly irrational, emotional beings who reason intuitively, not logically. People reason with simple decision-making rules. In other words, they trust their ‘gut.’

What’s the lesson for successful leaders? People are far more influenced by *stories* than by *data*. If you want to motivate a group, don’t give them left brain logical facts, statistics and hard data. Instead, capture their interest and emotion with a good analogy or a personal interest story.

### **Guiding Principle #5: It has to be fun**

If it isn’t fun, people won’t remain motivated. This is particularly true for volunteer positions, such as support alumni positions. If members do stay involved, it will be duty driven, colorless, passionless commitment. Strive for *fire* and *drive*, not duty and obligation.

### **Motivating Members:**

- Make members in your group want to do things. Be positive! Be enthusiastic!
- Study members and determine what makes each tick.
- Be a good listener.
- Criticize or reprove in private.

- Praise in public.
- Give credit where credit is due.
- Avoid domination or “forcefulness.”
- Let the members in on your plans and programs even when they’re in an early stage.
- Play up the positive.
- Be consistent.
- Show your members that you have confidence in them and that you expect them to do their best.
- Ask members for their counsel and help.
- When you’re wrong or make a mistake, admit it.
- Give courteous hearing to ideas from members.
- Be careful what you say and how you say it.
- Use every opportunity to build up in members a sense of importance.
- Give your members goals, a sense of direction, something to strive for and to achieve.
- Keep your members informed on matters affecting them.
- Give members a chance to take part in decisions, particularly those affecting them.
- Let your members know where they stand.
- Make personal contacts before and after meetings to encourage participation.
- Avoid assigning unnecessary tasks.
- Give group members something to do immediately. Interest level starts high and enthusiasm is generated.
- Encourage sharing without criticism or judgment. Try brainstorming.
- Remember that a met need is no longer a motivator. Continue to reassess members needs and to provide new challenges so that commitment to the task will be sustained.
- Utilize small groups and place persons on projects or committees where interests and talents lie.

- Don’t be upset by hassles.
- Give weight to the fact that people carry out best their own ideas.
- Be considerate.
- Delegate responsibility for details to members.
- Show sincere interest in and appreciation of the other fellow.
- Never forget that the leader sets the style for his members.

## Team Building

A team is a group of individuals working together with a common goal or purpose. Each individual in the team is responsible for contributing his skills and abilities to the efforts of the group.

No team is instantly effective. There will always be barriers to effective group work. Through successful team-building, group members will learn to recognize and develop strategies to break down these barriers. This will lead to improved productivity and effectiveness.

### Key Characteristics of an Effective Team

- Each team member is has a clearly defined role.
- The team’s purpose is clearly understood.
- Communication within the team is increased.
- There is an atmosphere of mutual support and respect for each team member.
- There is a strong understanding of how team members effectively work together.
- Conflict results in learning opportunity.
- Team members work collaboratively with less competition.
- There is a strong sense of interdependence within the team.

- Feedback is given. It should be constructive, specific, descriptive and should focus on behaviors that can be changed.